

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00
SAJ-01 NSC-05 H-01 /066 W
-----121030Z 015750 /17

R 121015Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9371
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USCINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE
CINCUSAREUR
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCUSAFE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MPOL, UK, NATO
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION MOTION ON DEFENSE CUTS

REF: LONDON 401

1. THE QUALITY PRESS AGAIN IS HIGHLIGHTING DEFENSE ISSUES IN ANTICIPATION OF TOMORROW'S DEBATE IN COMMONS WHICH, IN AN EDITORIAL IN THE TIMES, IS DESCRIBED AS PROMISING TO BE "...THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION ON DEFENSE FOR A DECADE."
2. IN A WELL-BALANCED EDITORIAL COMMENTARY ON THE SAD STATE OF THE LEVEL OF GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST IN DEFENSE MATTERS, AND ON THE "NEGATIVE, ILL-DEFINED COMMENTARY ON DEFENSE FROM THE LEFT", THE TIMES EDITORIAL IS HOPEFUL THAT NOW THE IMPLICATIONS OF DEFENSE CUTS WILL NOT

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PASS UNNOTICED BUT IT REMAINS PESSIMISTIC THAT THE DEBATE WILL NOT PREVENT THE DEFENSE BUDGET FROM BEING CUT -- CUTS MADE "...PRESUMABLY TO PLACATE THE LABOR LEFT, ALREADY ANGRY OVER OTHER PUBLIC SPENDING REDUCTIONS."

3. YESTERDAY THE LEFT-WING TRIBUNE GROUP ANNOUNCED IT

WILL SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT "...SINCE THE TORIES WANT INCREASED ARMS SPENDING AND WE WANT LESS ..." THE TRIBUNE GROUP WILL TABLE THEIR OWN AMENDMENT ASSERTING THAT THE PROPOSED 1.5 PERCENT (100 MILLION POUNDS) AND 3 PERCENT (200 MILLION POUNDS) CUTS "ARE INADEQUATE". IT IS THE PROSPECT THAT SEVERAL LABOR MPS ON THE RIGHT OF THE PARTY MAY NOT SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT WHICH THROWS PARTICULAR INTEREST ON THE DEBATE.

4. COMMENT: A REAL CHANCE EXISTS THAT THE DEBATE ON THE LEVEL OF DEFENSE SPENDING COULD BEGIN TO PUSH DEFENSE MATTERS IN THEIR BROADEST SENSE TO THE FOREFRONT OF POLITICAL DEBATE. AS AN ISSUE DEFENSE SPENDING HAS BEEN RELEGATED TO AN ALL TOO QUIESCENT PLACE IN PUBLIC DEBATE. BUT IT MAY BE THAT THIS TIME THE OPPOSITION'S "TASTE OF BLOOD" -- TOGETHER WITH THE EFFORTS OF LABOR RIGHT-WINGERS AND MODERATES TO MARSHAL SUPPORT AGAINST TOO HEAVY CUTS -- MAY CONVERGE TO IMPEL DEFENSE ISSUES TO BECOME A MAJOR FOCAL POINT OF PARTISAN DEBATE. WHILE WE REMAIN SKEPTICAL THAT PRIORITIES IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE CAN BE CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY BEFORE THE UK'S ECONOMIC SITUATION HAS IMPROVED, WE MAY WELL BE WITNESSING THE END OF TREATING DEFENSE SPENDING AS A SACRIFICIAL LAMB TO POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY. CERTAINLY THE EARLY SIGNS THAT A REAL FIGHT IS BEING MOUNTED ON THE LEVEL OF DEFENSE SPENDING ARE EVIDENT. IF THE OPPOSITION KEEPS THE PRESSURE UP -- AND THE BRITISH PUBLIC CARES ENOUGH TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO CHAMPION DEFENSE'S PRIORITY -- WE MAY AT LONG LAST BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEEING THE END OF THE RUNDOWN OF BRITAIN'S ARMED FORCES AND DEFENSE EFFORT AS A WHOLE.

ARMSTRONG

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY BUDGET, MILITARY PLANS, MILITARY POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 12-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LONDON00500
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770011-0816
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770159/aaaabzwm.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4e5c70da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 LONDON 401
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3616636
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPPOSITION MOTION ON DEFENSE CUTS
TAGS: MPOL, UK, NATO
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4e5c70da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009